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UN's chief jabs U.S. on expulsions

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United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar considers the American decision to order 25 Soviet UN diplomats out of the country "incompatible" with a 1947 agreement between the United States and the world organization, a UN spokesman said yesterday.

Soviet UN Ambassador Alexander Belonogov said that the United States has "no legal ground" to order the reduction of UN diplomatic staffs, which are accredited to the UN and not to the host country, and that the Reagan administration's action was "blatantly provocative."

But John Poindexter, the national security adviser, who was traveling with President Reagan in New Orleans, said the United States acted properly.

Poindexter said: "How could it be improper for a country to protect its national security? The whole point of the message at the UN is that the United States is no longer going to tolerate espionage being conducted out of the United Nations, out of the missions, with impunity. It's a simple thing."

Francois Giuliani, a spokesman for Perez de Cuellar, said the U.S. action was questionable because it entailed a mass expulsion of diplomats and not, as provided in the 1947 agreement, selective expulsions because of the misconduct of an individual accredited to the UN.

Under the agreement, there is a provision for a three-member arbitration panel to resolve such disputes, but neither side has asked for it.

Giuliani said Perez de Cuellar offered to "help both parties out of their difficulties if they so wish."

Alleged spying

In Washington, State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb said the expulsion was simply a followup to a U.S. decision announced six months ago. The administration says the Soviet staff at the UN is disproportionately large and engages in spying.

Kalb refused to say whether any of the 25 Soviets were spies.

Belonogov said at a UN news conference, "This action is blatantly provocative. Politically, it is intended to aggravate Soviet-American relations. It serves the interest of those circles in the United States who are seeking to exacerbate these relations and is aimed at thwarting Soviet-American dialogue and a possible summit meeting."

The United States requested in March that the staffs of Moscow's three missions to the UN—the Soviet, Ukrainian and Byelorussian offices—be reduced from a total of 275 to 170 by April 1988.

The first stage in the reduction was set for Oct. 1, to bring the size of the Soviet Mission from 243 members to 218. The United States has given the Soviets a list of 25 diplomats it wants expelled by the October deadline.

Belonogov said the size of his mission is 205 now and was the same in March, when the U.S. request was first made. But he said the Byelorussian and Ukrainian missions have 12 members each for a total of 229.

Belonogov said the matter will be taken up in Washington during meetings today and tomorrow between Secretary of State Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.

"This kind of behavior cannot but evoke condemnation, nor can it remain without consequences," the Soviet ambassador said.

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